

# SPINY SOFTSHELL

(*Apalone spinifera*)

NONNATIVE



**Description:** Large turtle (up to 20 inches long) with an olive to tan colored, round, flat, and smooth leathery plastron with a pattern of dark blotches and a lighter colored edge. It has a long neck, webbed feet, and a snorkel-like snout.

**Habitat:** Aquatic; prefers slow-moving water, including lakes and ponds with soft sand or mud banks. Native to the eastern United States, but are established in urban ponds, canals, irrigation ditches, slow-moving rivers and lakes in central, south central, and western Arizona.

**Behavior:** Omnivorous; eats snails, aquatic invertebrates, crayfish, fish, tadpoles, worms, carrion, and some plant matter. Almost exclusively found in the water or buried in warm shallow mud and using its long neck to reach the surface with its snorkel-like snout.

Spiny softshells have a long neck and snorkel-like nose



**If you find one:** If you find a softshell turtle away from a source of water, where it might be harmed or cause harm to others, please contact the [nearest Game and Fish office](#) or the Phoenix Herpetological Society for information and recommendations. Use extreme caution around softshell turtles as they have powerful

\*A fishing license is required to remove softshell turtles from the wild in Arizona. See current regulations at [www.azgfd.gov](http://www.azgfd.gov).